

REMARKS

Claims 2-10 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 2-4 and 6 are amended for proper antecedent basis; new claims 7-10 are added; and claim 1 is canceled without prejudice to, or disclaimer of, the subject matter recited therein. Support for new claims 7-10 may be found at least in original claim 1, as filed, and in paragraphs [0030], [0042], [0043], [0045], [0049], [0054] and [0057] of the specification. No new matter is added.

I. The Claims Define Patentable Subject Matter

The Office Action rejects claims 1 and 4-6 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over JP 05-220865 (Adachi) in view of WO 02/102579 (Suda), and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 3,888,720 to Habert; and rejects claims 2 and 3 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Adachi in view of Suda and Habert, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,624,780 to Nishimori et al. (hereinafter "Nishimori"). The rejections of claims 2-6 are respectfully traversed, and the rejection of canceled claim 1 is moot.

None of the applied references teaches or renders obvious a transfer drum having application regions being divided into a plurality of low adhesion sections with a low adhesion force, and a plurality of high adhesion sections with a high adhesion force, the low adhesion sections and the high adhesion sections being alternately arranged in the width direction of the transfer drum, as recited in claim 7.

The Office Action asserts that Adachi discloses several features previously recited in canceled claim 1, and now recited in new claim 7. Specifically, the Office Action asserts that Adachi discloses a band member forming drum and a band member B that allegedly correspond to the claimed transfer drum and sheet member, respectively, as previously recited in canceled claim 1, and now recited in new claim 7 (see Office Action, page 2). The Office Action further asserts that Adachi discloses first arc-shaped segments 21 and second arc-

shaped segments 25 that allegedly correspond to the claimed high adhesion sections and low adhesion sections, respectively, as previously recited in canceled claim 1, and now recited in new claim 7 (see Office Action, page 2). The Office Action's assertions fail for at least the following reasons.

Adachi's band member forming drum cannot reasonably correspond to the claimed transfer drum. Adachi merely discloses that first arc-shaped segments 21 and second arc-shaped segments 25 are alternately arranged in the circumferential direction of the band member forming drum (see Adachi, Abstract and Figs. 2 and 4-6). Adachi also merely discloses that a band member B is released from the band member forming drum when the segments 21 are moved radially inward, followed by the segments 25 being moved radially inward, thus releasing the band member B from the band member forming drum (see Adachi, Abstract and Figs. 5 and 6). Thus, Adachi does not teach a transfer drum. If the disclosure of Adachi were applied to a transfer drum, the sheet member would be supported only intermittently in the circumferential direction (see Adachi, Fig. 2), particularly when the sheet member is applied with pressure while it is being transferred from the transfer drum, thereby giving rise to the formation of undesirable indentations or deformations in the circumferential direction, thus creating nonuniformities in the product tires. In contrast, the claimed transfer drum is structured to cause the sheet member to be uniformly supported on the transfer drum in the circumferential direction during the transfer of the sheet member. Thus, because Adachi does not disclose the requisite structure of the claimed transfer drum, including the low adhesion sections and the high adhesion sections uniformly supporting the sheet member, the features of new claim 7 would not have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention. Additionally, the other applied references, either alone or in a permissible combination, do not disclose the claimed transfer drum, and thus do not remedy the above-described deficiencies of Adachi.

Therefore, for at least the reasons recited above, Applicant respectfully submits that the features recited in new independent claim 7 are patentable over the applied references. Moreover, because claims 2-6 are amended to depend from new claim 7, Applicant respectfully requests withdrawal of the rejections of claims 2-6, at least based on their respective dependence on claim 7, as well as for the additional patentable features they individually recite.

Furthermore, because new claims 8-10 variously depend from new claim 7, Applicant respectfully submits that new claims 8-10 are patentable over the applied references, at least based on their respective dependence on claim 7, as well as for the additional patentable features they individually recite.

II. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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JAO:BDM/hjr

Attachment:

Petition for Extension of Time

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